



## **U.S. Forces Japan**

**Speech Transcript – ADM Thomas Fargo,**

**Commander, U.S. Pacific Command**

**USFJ/5<sup>th</sup> AF Change of Command Ceremony Thursday, Feb. 10, 2005**

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Remarks as delivered by ADM Tom Fargo, commander of **U.S. Pacific Command**  
**at the USFJ Change of Command, Yokota Air Force Base, Japan**  
**10 Feb 05**

**ADMIRAL FARGO:** *Ohayo gozaimasu*, good morning and since General Hester and I represent the contingent from Hawaii, I would be remiss not to say *aloha*!

*Watashi no Hawaii go wa nihon go yori sukoshi jozu desu.* If I have done any justice to that, it should say, “My Hawaiian is only slightly better than my Japanese.”

When I traveled to Tokyo a few months ago in October, I thought it just might be the last time I would visit this great nation as commander of the U.S. Pacific Command. It wasn't, and I am delighted to have one more opportunity to visit the Kanto Plain. I know it is winter here at Yokota, but it feels nice and warm here in Hanger 15! And Colonel [Jeff Stambaugh, commander of troops], your troops look just great. So, thanks for the invitation.

Ambassador, Secretary Onodera, Mrs. Abe, my good friend, General Massaki -- and General Massaki, I see that you have a big contingent of your predecessors here -- General Sugiyama, General Takagochi and Admiral Ishikawa, General Yoshida -- and I am going to add in the American contingent here of the component commanders: General Hester -- since he has a long history here in Japan -- General Perkins, and Admiral Ruehe, distinguished guests, flag and general officers, family and friends, -- friends like Yoshi Ito and the good bishop who are with us today.

But, most important, General & Mrs. Waskow, General Wright, and all of our troops from both the American and Japanese Forces. What a great tribute to the Waskows and the Wrights that you could all be with us here this morning.

I recognize clearly that Tom and Orville are the important players today, so I'll do my best to keep my part brief.

I'm reminded, after all, that President Bush's inaugural address last month was only 17 minutes long. In fact, the history of U.S. inaugural speeches is a lesson in brevity in itself. The shortest inaugural address on record was one by George Washington, which was just 135 words. The longest was William Henry Harrison's in 1841. He delivered a two-hour, 9,000-word soliloquy into the teeth of a freezing northeast wind. He immediately caught cold and a month later, died of pneumonia. You are all fortunate that even in this protected space this morning, my survival instinct is strong -- I have no intention of tempting fate.

So I'll focus on my role today, which is to add my appreciation for Tom Waskow's leadership over the past three-plus years and to set the stage for General Waskow and General Wright to properly transfer their command responsibilities.

Shortly, you will hear from General Hester about many of Tom's accomplishments as the commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force. So let me focus on a few of the important contributions Tom and our United States Forces in Japan

have made, both here and throughout the Pacific, and talk to how they fit into the larger challenges that face our two nations today.

I've had the privilege to command in Asia and the Pacific for more than five years now. Some remarkable things have happened during that time – many historic and of course some tragic – like the recent tsunami. All have combined to impact our region and our world. Through it all, however, one theme continues to ring true and gain broad acceptance ... the future of our new world lies in the greatest measure in Asia and the Pacific, and the world would do well to take notice.

I don't believe that I could overstate either the importance of this region or the United States' commitment to it. And the cornerstone to our ability to support and defend our shared interests has always been the close and cooperative relationships with regional allies. Certainly as you look around this gathering today, the strength of those relationships is ever present. Indeed, our strong partnership for peace has been important to the stability in Asia and the Pacific for this past half century.

Joint actions between the U.S. and our friends, allies and partners have long helped to deter regional conflicts, have reinforced safe and secure trade routes, access for commerce and decades of prosperity. And equally important, we have together promoted democracy, a respect for human rights and freedom everywhere.

And, there are lots of good examples. The 14 democratic elections that took place in Asia this past year are a testimony to this progress and a key to future stability. As we proceed deeper into the 21st century, the need for strong security relationships between the United States and the nations of Asia-Pacific is as great as it ever has been, and will certainly remain so for as far as we can see.

In addition to arguing the primacy of this region, I remind people everywhere that the alliance between the United States and Japan remains our most important security arrangement in the Pacific, and in fact, I believe that no relationship is stronger – or more vital - than the one we enjoy with Japan. It is reflected in our combined exercises, such as Keen Edge and Yama Sakura. It's reflected in real-world missions, such as combating terrorism, the reconstruction of Iraq and the ongoing tsunami relief efforts. And, it is evident in the mutual respect and admiration our two nations share and our service members enjoy.

I have great confidence that this alliance will only get stronger. It will continue to mature because we recognize together that we live in a dynamic, changing time that will require agile and flexible forces to provide an investment – not only in our national security – but also, in our ability to respond to regional crises, with both speed and humanity.

The strength and the foresight of Japan's leadership, and the wisdom of the Japanese people, have produced a self-defense force capable of defending their nation while contributing effectively on the world scene. And, they have provided historic legislation to allow it to do so. I'm sure that I represent all of us in the international community who send their thanks. It is progress such as this that has reminded the world that Japan is a consummate partner for peace and prosperity.

One man who has served as the United States' military's most visible representative, a staunch advocate for the strength of our alliance, and who's been instrumental to the successful cooperation and coordination our countries enjoy, is Lieutenant General Tom Waskow.

It seems fitting to talk about the U.S. Forces Japan's impact starting with one of their most recent significant contributions – those in support of Tsunami Disaster Relief. Among the very first aircraft and crews to arrive in response to the devastation in Southeast Asia, were the aircraft assets of Yokota and Kadena and the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. This ready response demonstrated both the compassion and commitment of our

forces, the centrality of their location, and the flexibility and relevance of the alliance of our two nations. All to extend a helping hand to our regional neighbors.

Over the past three years, USFJ has also been instrumental in helping prepare the Japanese Self Defense Forces for their largest operational deployment in 59 years. Whether it was fitting C-130s with onboard defensive systems, providing realistic training scenarios, effecting critical communications to allow reliable reach back to Japan – USFJ assumed the mission with great enthusiasm and unquestioned competence. So, I think we all recognize the importance of this command, in this location.

And Tom, and especially Sheila, I would like to say up front that we appreciate greatly you extending your command here, and again, that's because this is a particularly important place.

No unit is successful without the guidance and leadership of an energetic and committed commander – and that is precisely what we have enjoyed in Tom Waskow. From his first assignment as a forward air controller in Vietnam to multiple assignments spent training young pilots, to a number of well-served command positions – we reveal a man who has literally served all over the world and with great distinction.

I know how proud you are, Tom, of your service as a F-15 Eagle pilot. And you should be ...and if I am not mistaken ... there is one of those parked right outside this hangar. You should be proud, in the current vernacular of the day, at least I hear this from my son, it is a great ride.

There is one anecdote I'd like to share to illustrate Tom's unending quest to excel. During his last physical fitness test, he was determined to run as fast – or faster – than his young Wing commanders. And I want you to know he completed the first mile in less than 7 minutes. That's pretty fast, Tom. Unfortunately, generals are a little like airplanes ... they get brittle with age. So we had to put Tom back in the hangar for a little maintenance – but now he is as good as new, and ready for a new set of adventures.

Not only does Tom relinquish command today, he is also retiring after 35 years of service. In the past, at times when performing retirement ceremonies, I like to mention how different the world was “way back when” when the honoree first entered the service. But I think today, I'm just going to mention to Tom what he already knows and reflects: that youth is an attitude ... especially when you run a 7-minute mile.

And while Tom has mastered every element necessary for the successful commander, he'd be the first to acknowledge his strong partner in success ... and no surprise, it is certainly Sheila. Tom and Sheila met about 12 years ago, right here at Yokota in the officer's club. In fact, their meeting was so momentous that when the club was remodeled awhile back, Tom and Sheila were presented with a souvenir from the club. Sheila, I think, or I know, that's got to have a place of honor in your new home.

Sheila is among the hardest working folks in USFJ, and that's particularly impressive since I'm confident she's the only one that's not getting paid! She has been integral to the success of the DoD schools here, and has taken a personal role in reading programs and special events intended to promote learning for our children.

As you all know well, she has been a remarkable role model for the family members – continuously reminding the leadership that troops could never do their jobs as well without the enduring support of their loved ones. And no doubt, Sheila has nearly single-handedly advanced international relations here in Japan. I know her personally as a wonderful, energetic woman who remains deeply committed to the welfare and quality of life for our service members and their families. A positive force for the Japanese-U.S. alliance. And they're all right. Sheila, for your enthusiasm and selfless service, I offer our thanks and I offer our applause.

Tom and Sheila head off to new adventures and to the house they picked out, conveniently located on the 5<sup>th</sup> tee of a stunning golf course in Huntersville, North Carolina. Tom, as you head to Huntersville, remember what I

am sure some famous Air Force general once said: the next best thing to playing golf well, is playing golf poorly.

Just starting out on his own adventure, we welcome General Bruce Wright. I'm told no one calls him Bruce except maybe his wife Kerri, who will join him shortly. He goes by "Orville!" The tradition of nicknames and call signs in the aviation community is a wonderful thing. Orville is lucky because his call sign harkens to the early history of aviation, the Wright brothers, and seems still appropriate 30 years later. At this stage in life, Orville, many of your friends aren't so lucky. They are trying either to explain or to lose their call signs.

I also know that Orville is a big fan of Teddy Roosevelt, so I'll leave you with one of his sentiments: He said, "The best leader is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and the self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it." Orville, you've got the best people and the best partners a commander could ask for, and you can see them in front of you this morning, and as always, you will do well. You are the right man, at the right time, in a great job, and you have our full confidence.

It is a great privilege to be with all of you today. As we speak this morning, we remember our peers, our comrades and fellow citizens who continue to press onward the world over, pursuing those conditions which will permit liberty to thrive and where tyranny will have no place.

Martin Luther King said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

I am grateful we all have one another to stand alongside, for with this, we all stand taller.

Thank you all, and God bless you all.